

Royal National Institute for the Blind

Music in large print



THE MUSIC PUBLISHERS' ASSOCIATION LTD

Foreword

This leaflet is intended to raise awareness of the issues faced by partially-sighted people who wish to read and write music. It sets out the position regarding copyright, explains how large print music can be produced at local level or obtained from publishers, and offers practical advice for its effective use.

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RNIB Music Education Advisor
June 1994

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Barry Dix, a visually impaired music teacher, using a computer and CCTV to enlarge music

Introduction

Many people who are partially sighted can read music if it is enlarged. Just how much bigger the print needs to be varies from one person to another.

There are two main ways of enlarging music, either

- by increasing the size of the print itself, or
- by using a visual aid to make the print look bigger to the eye.

To obtain music in large print, you can either

- have it enlarged it yourself, or
- buy it already enlarged.

Making large print music yourself

The process of enlarging music raises three main questions.

- What is the position regarding copyright?

- What degree of enlargement should be used?
- What is the best way of producing music in large print?

Copyright

Under the Copyright, Designs & Patents Act 1988, a musical work is copyright during the life of the composer and for seventy years afterwards. Printed editions of music may embrace several copyrights, involving the composer, the writer (where there is a text), the arranger, the editor and the publisher.

Music copyright protects the interests of composers and arrangers, and those who edit and publish their work. Illegal copying discourages creativity by musicians and investment by music publishers.

However, the Music Publishers' Association recognises the special needs of partially sighted people, and makes the following recommendations.

Before making a large print copy, contact the publisher of the original for their approval.

There should be no problem provided that

- the music to be enlarged was obtained legitimately,
- multiple copies are not made, and
- enlarged copies are not re-sold.

If these conditions are met, the publisher will send you a sticker which should be attached to your copy, verifying its legitimacy.

Different sizes of large print music

Experiment to find out what size of large print music suits you best. For some partially-sighted people, a moderate increase of around 140% (A4 → A3) will usually be sufficient (depending, of course, on the size of the original). For those

requiring a greater degree of enlargement than this, two points need bearing in mind.

First, since musical signs vary so much in size, the enlargement needed to make the smallest signs visible means that those covering a greater area on the page may be difficult to take in at a single glance.



In **Example 1** on the next page, the treble clef covers approximately 200x the area of the dot following the minim.

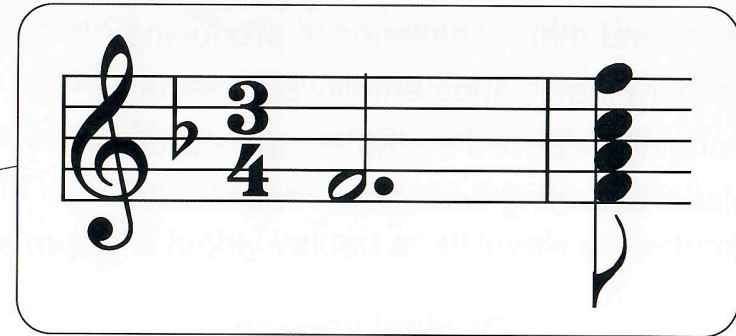
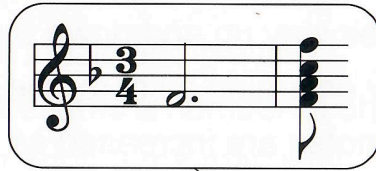
To make dots like this legible may mean enlarging them by a factor of four.

See **Example 2**. With this increase, the treble clef becomes 6 cm high, and the music as a whole is difficult to manage.

What may be needed, therefore, is differing degrees of enlargement for different musical characters.

In **Example 3**, the dot has been made about four times bigger against a general twofold enlargement.

Example 1



Example 3



Example 2

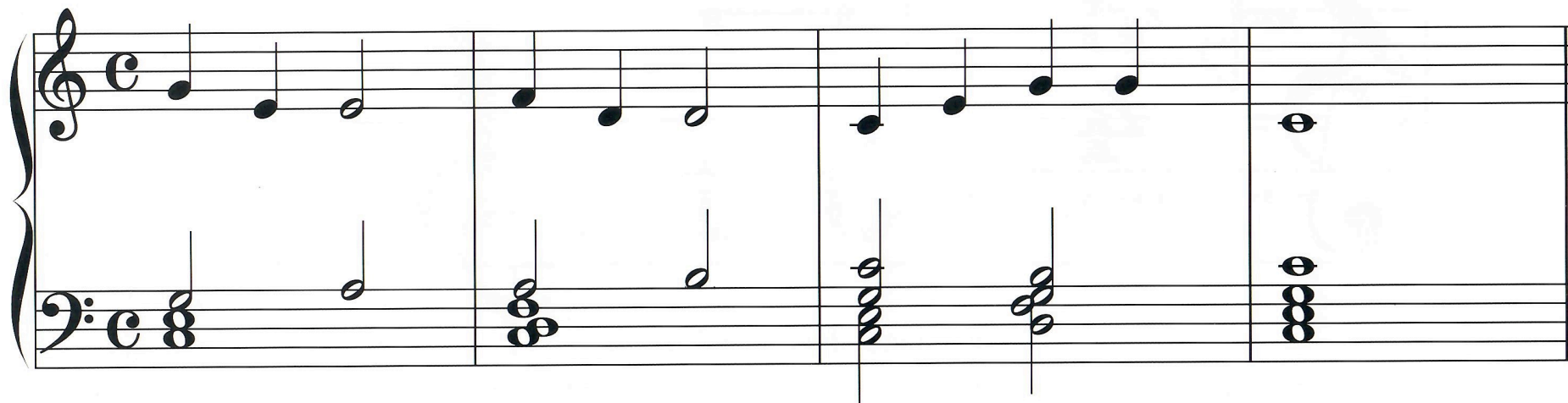
The second major challenge in producing large print that is substantially bigger than the original is posed by the complex process of visual scanning needed to read music.

Original version



A musical score is like a map, which the eye has to view vertically as well as horizontally. Even in a simple melody, the notes may weave their way up and down the page. Simply by enlarging a score, the distances between notes are increased as well as their size, and, particularly for those with a limited field of vision, it may be difficult for the eye to trace the intended path from one sign to the next.

Simple 200% enlargement



Hence large print music can often be made easier to manage by reducing the relative distance between notes, staves and other symbols.

This will mean a more efficient use of space too; a key issue for those using large print.

**200% enlargement
of signs with
re-formatting to
bring the notes
closer together**



**Here, the music
takes up little
more space
across the page
than the original**

Producing large print music

There are three main approaches that can be taken:

- write the music out by hand,
- use a photocopier, or
- use a computer.

Whichever method is chosen, remember that a good contrast between print and paper is essential.

Writing music out by hand

The chief advantage of this method is that the transcriber can exert complete editorial control. The spacing and size of notes is flexible, small signs (such as dots) can be made big enough to see easily, and information that is not needed can be omitted. Writing music by hand is cheap and does not depend on special technology.

Beyond short pieces, however, copying music out in this way can be very time-consuming, and hand-written music, with its inevitable irregularities, is rarely as easy to read as printed material.

Any details concerning the copyright found on the original should be written out on your copy too.

Using a photocopier

As photocopiers capable of enlargement become ever more widely accessible, in schools, libraries and local shops and businesses, so using them to produce large print music becomes an increasingly viable option.

The main advantage of photocopying is that it is quick and easy to do. Successive enlargements permit a substantial increase in size, although there can be a loss of definition, and small signs may remain unreadable. Hence a certain amount

of editing by hand may still be necessary to ensure complete legibility.

Simple re-formatting, to avoid large blank areas on the page, for example, is possible through cutting and pasting, although this can be a painstaking process. A further consideration is that long pieces can be prohibitively expensive to reproduce at commercial copying rates.

Using a computer

There is an increasing amount of software on the market that enables individuals to produce music to their own specifications, and, by using a laser printer, the results can be of the highest quality, as the examples in this pamphlet show. The spacing of signs and their size is completely variable, and the music can be re-formatted to fit on any page.

However, the necessary hardware and software are expensive, require a high degree of expertise to use

effectively, and the production of musical material of any length is very time-consuming.

Again, any details concerning the copyright found on the original should be transferred onto your copy.

Buying music in large print

While a good deal of music for beginners is of a comfortable size for most partially-sighted people to use, only a very limited amount of more advanced large print material is available commercially as standard stock. A list is contained in the resource paper **RP14** 'Information on Music for People with Partial Sight', published by the National Music and Disability Information Service. This is based at Foxhole, Dartington, Totnes, Devon, TQ9 6EB; telephone 0803-866701.

Apart from this, a number of publishers who are members of the Music Publishers' Association will provide enlarged copies of music for partially-

sighted people who need them. These are sold at the recommended retail or publisher's archive price, subject to the availability of the music and the resources to make an enlarged copy. To obtain large print music in this way, find out who publishes the piece you want (your local library or music shop should be able to help) and contact them direct. The advantage of obtaining large print music straight from the publisher is that you will get material of a high quality without needing special resources or expertise at local level. However, the music you receive may still require further modification to meet your needs precisely.

Handling large print music

Big sheets of paper can be made less unwieldy by mounting them on thin card. Adequate provision will need to be made for carrying material around and storing it carefully: music that may have taken a long time to prepare can all too quickly become irredeemably creased and dog-eared.

The importance of good lighting

Having obtained music that is appropriately enlarged, it is important to have a favourable environment in which to use it. Suitable illumination is essential, and angle-poise lamps can often supply the necessary intensity of light. Not all partially-sighted people need a bright light in which to work, though—some may well prefer conditions that most readers would find too dim. Irrespective of this, one should always aim to avoid undue glare and shadow.

Making effective use of music in large print

Clearly, the more a piece of music is increased in size, the less that can be seen of it at any one time. This means that people learning to use large print music of any complexity will need to develop effective strategies for scanning and memorising,

enabling them to form an overall picture of a piece from many tiny impressions. Putting together these intricate jigsaws of sound may take many hours of patient application. However, the necessary skills can be improved with practice.



Neil studying from a large print score

Reading music and playing at the same time

Reading large print music and playing at the same time presents a number of challenges. For example, extra page turns may well have to be accommodated. A further issue is posture since, in performing, there may be a conflict between getting the score near enough to the eyes to read and the position that needs to be adopted to play a particular instrument comfortably and correctly. With suitable swivelling or other adjustment, commercially available rests or reading stands—modified if necessary—can meet certain needs. Alternatively, resource paper **RP14** has suggestions for obtaining or making stands that are tailored to individual requirements.

Some partially-sighted people may well have to accept that to perform music of any length or complexity will mean reading and memorising it

in advance. Clearly this places greater demands on musicality and motivation than would otherwise be the case. However, memory does develop with use, and the ability to play pieces without the music is highly valued at all levels of performing.

In music examinations that require sight-reading, it should be permissible for partially-sighted candidates to view the test in advance, and subsequently perform it from memory.

Simplified notation

Beginners, and others whose music literacy needs are at an elementary level, may care to explore forms of notation that are visually less demanding than the traditional stave. Melodies can be written using letters, for example, supplemented where necessary with lines to indicate the lengths of notes.

E	E	E	—	E	E	E	—
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

E	G	C	D	E	—	—	—
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

F	F	F	F	F	E	E	E
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

G	G	F	D	C	—	—	—
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

‘Jingle Bells’ in letter notation



Carol playing from letter notation

Visual aids

Any of the standard reading aids can be used to make music accessible. Their chief advantage is that they make *any* music instantly available to the large print user. Closed-circuit televisions (CCTV's) can be particularly useful in the detailed study of a score because of their potentially high degree of magnification, offering for some people the most effective way of viewing small detail such as fingering and dots. CCTV's usually have the option of showing a reversed image (white print on a black background) which minimises glare. Against the decided advantages of CCTV's have to be set their initial expense and the problem of portability if a large screen is to be used. Hence they will be most cost effective where a large number of different pieces need to be viewed, and most practicable for those whose reading needs are typically restricted to one location. Playing at the same time as reading the music is just possible using a motorised table, although page turns cannot be accommodated automatically.

Some partially-sighted performers read music through slide projection, which permits a relatively large amount of music to be viewed at once. Again the equipment needed is bulky and difficult to transport, though, making it an option most suitable where frequent changes of location are not expected.

Writing music down

Many of the principles that apply to reading large print music, such as suitable lighting, and having an adequate contrast between print and paper, are equally valid when it comes to writing music down. Enlarged staves can easily be produced at local level, using a photocopier to mass produce lines drawn manually or with a computer. Experiment with different widths and thicknesses of line to find out what suits you best. Write with black ink. Some people may find it difficult to produce music by hand that is acceptably neat and legible. If this is the case, you could choose to work through an emanuensis or use a computer.



Manuscript lines of differing widths and thicknesses

Conclusion

In this leaflet, we have seen that there is no reason why partially-sighted people should not enjoy equal access to music literacy, given the availability of suitable equipment or materials and with the development of certain skills such as memorisation.

For further help and advice, please contact the RNIB's Music Leisure Officer who is based at 224 Great Portland Street, London W1N 6AA, telephone 071-388 1266; or the Music Education Advisor at RNIB Education Centre: London, Garrow House, 190 Kensal Road, London W10 5BT; telephone 081-968 8600.

The Music Publishers' Association Ltd will be pleased to answer specific queries regarding copyright, and can be contacted at 18/20 York Buildings, London WC2N 6JU; telephone 071-839 7779.



Partially-sighted children enjoy making music

The **Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB)** is the leading charity working for blind and partially sighted people in the UK, providing over 60 different services which include

- braille and talking books,
- hotels and residential care homes,
- specialist schools and colleges, and
- support for visually impaired children and young people in mainstream education.

The **Music Publishers' Association Ltd (MPA)** promotes and protects the interests of music publishers, providing a forum for discussion, and encouraging a close working relationship between the Performing Right Society (PRS) and the Mechanical Copyright Protection Society (MCPS).

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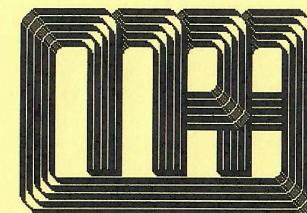


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